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Strengthening of the coordination of humanitarian and disaster relief assistance of the United Nations, including special economic assistance: emergency international assistance for peace, normalcy and reconstruction of war-stricken Afghanistan

The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security

Letter dated 26 April 2001 from the Permanent Representative of Kazakhstan to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

On instructions from my Government, I have the honour to transmit herewith a document entitled "The conceptual approaches of Kazakhstan to resolving the situation in Afghanistan" (see annex).

I should be grateful if you would have the text of this letter and its annex circulated as an official document of the Security Council and of the General Assembly, under agenda items 20 (d) and 46 of its fifty-fifth session.

(*Signed*) Madina B. **Jarbussynova**
Permanent Representative of the
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Annex to the letter dated 26 April 2001 from the Permanent Representative of Kazakhstan to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

The conceptual approaches of Kazakhstan to resolving the situation in Afghanistan

An analysis of the situation that is developing in Afghanistan shows that it is continuing to remain complicated and unpredictable, that there has been no significant progress in settling the conflict, and that the efforts made by the United Nations, the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) and other interested countries have not led to the desired results.

The ongoing war, the transformation of Afghanistan into one of the largest world centres for the production and export of narcotic drugs, the concentration in that country of an enormous amount of weapons, and the existence of centres for training terrorist groups are contributing to the increase in tension in the region and represent a real threat to the stability and security of Central Asia and the entire world community.

At the same time, it should be recognized that the lack of positive results in bringing about an Afghan settlement is linked to the determination of the warring Afghan sides to settle the conflict solely by military means and also the unwillingness of the States concerned to abandon their geopolitical ambitions and to address the Afghan problem in real earnest. The trend towards an escalation of the military and political situation in Afghanistan as well as the instances in which military and other assistance has been provided to the warring Afghan groups by individual States in the region are evidence of this.

In this connection, Kazakhstan bases its position on the following conceptual approaches to resolving the situation in Afghanistan.

1. Kazakhstan fully supports the Secretary-General's position with regard to Afghanistan that the incursions in 1999 and 2000 by Islamic fighters into the territory of Central Asian countries once again underscore the danger of the spread of a conflict and the need for a comprehensive approach, not a partial one, to settling the Afghan crisis.

In this connection, Kazakhstan advocates the strict implementation of the General Assembly and Security Council resolutions on Afghanistan as well as the statements by the President of the Security Council on the situation in Afghanistan demanding the non-interference in its internal affairs and the halting of the delivery of weapons to the warring Afghan groups.

Concerned about this state of affairs, the President of Kazakhstan, N. A. Nazarbayev, during the Millennium Summit of the United Nations in September 2000, called for the convening of a special meeting of the Security Council devoted to a consideration of the situation in Afghanistan and Central Asia in order to develop practical measures for stabilizing it.

Kazakhstan views such a meeting not as a single act. It is clear that such a highly complicated problem as Afghanistan cannot be solved by simply holding a meeting, even of such an elevated forum as the United Nations Security Council. We

consider the convening of a special meeting of the Security Council on the situation in Afghanistan as a preliminary step leading to the beginning of a process in which the international community takes a number of large-scale, comprehensive political, economic and humanitarian measures. In our opinion, such a meeting would enable the countries concerned to take a new look at the Afghan problem, highlight the defects and shortcomings of what has been done by the international community, and also indicate further possibilities for ensuring that the process of resolving the situation in Afghanistan is carried out through peaceful means. It is important for this process to be conducted with the strict and ongoing monitoring of the Security Council. This will be a serious signal for all Afghan groups that the world community, under the auspices of the United Nations, intends to deal comprehensively and in real earnest with the Afghan problem until it is completely solved. This will also demonstrate the firm intention of the community of nations to allocate the necessary economic and financial resources for these purposes.

In our view, good political will on the part of all participants in the peace process is a mandatory requirement for creating a constructive atmosphere at such a meeting. Otherwise, any attempts by the international community to settle the conflict will meet with failure.

2. Kazakhstan considers that the efforts by States must be aimed at instilling in the Afghan people hope that the world community will be able to provide large-scale assistance in restoring the economy of Afghanistan, which has been destroyed by war. It is, therefore, extremely important that the neighbouring countries and interested countries strictly adhere to the principles set forth in the Tashkent Declaration on the results of the meeting of the six-plus-two group, which calls upon the neighbouring countries of Afghanistan that are members of the group to prohibit the transit through their territory of military, technical and material assistance for the warring Afghan groups.

3. Kazakhstan believes that individual measures — either an embargo on the delivery of weapons or sporadic actions to combat drug trafficking — will not have a long-term effect. These measures must become an integral part of a general plan for the economic rehabilitation of Afghanistan, which, together with an immediate ceasefire between the warring Afghan groups and the provision of international economic assistance, would include such elements as using the potential of Afghanistan's economic, political and intellectual elite which has emigrated from the country, establishing a system of State administration, reviving the ability of the peoples of Afghanistan to deal with their own problems, and solving the problems related to education, health care and restoring the historical and cultural heritage.

Accordingly, considering that Afghanistan at the current time has become a transitional political entity whose fate practically depends entirely on the correlation of interests and the degree to which foreign political figures are involved in its affairs, Kazakhstan believes that all interested States, including the member countries of the six-plus-two group (China, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Uzbekistan, Pakistan, Turkmenistan and Tajikistan plus the United States of America and the Russian Federation), the States members of the European Union (first and foremost, Germany, France, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, Italy and Sweden), a number of countries from the Asia region (Japan, Turkey, Malaysia, Indonesia and India), the group of Arab States (first of all,

Saudi Arabia and Egypt), other countries from the Central Asian region (including Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan), the international financial institutions and the United Nations specialized agencies, funds and programmes (the United Nations Development Programme, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the United Nations Children's Fund, the World Health Organization and so forth), and also other regional and international organizations, including the Organization of the Islamic Conference and the Organization for Economic Cooperation, must be actively involved in this peace process.

Furthermore, taking into account the international community's lack of a complete picture as to what is happening in Afghanistan, it is also necessary to use the mechanisms of the Rome, Bonn, Cyprus peace groups and other Afghan public organizations situated abroad in order to unify the database on Afghanistan and have a positive effect on the process of reactivating negotiations between the warring Afghan groups and of establishing a highly responsible Government in the future.

We welcome overall the idea of holding in Afghanistan a meeting of the *Loya Jirga*, the Council of Elders of the Afghan tribes, which in the past played an important role in the life of Afghan society and fulfilled the function of a body that regulated relations between the various tribes of the country. At the same time, this initiative should be developed in isolation from and independent of any narrow political, national or other interests on the part of the States involved in the peace process and interested States.

Obtaining a complete picture and information with regard to Afghanistan and the processes, measures, groups and so forth that are influencing the situation in the country is a most important task. Carrying out this task will enable the world community to work out adequate measures based on the real state of affairs. It is obvious that such a database must be concentrated in the United Nations.

4. Kazakhstan is firmly convinced that all international efforts to resolve the situation in Afghanistan must be conducted under the auspices of the United Nations, which is an impartial mediator in the process of achieving peace and national harmony in Afghanistan. In this connection, Kazakhstan fully supports the efforts of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Afghanistan, Mr. F. Vendrell, and the activities of the United Nations Special Mission to Afghanistan and is ready to continue to provide them with the necessary assistance.

Kazakhstan believes, in this connection, that in order to achieve positive and practical results in resolving the situation in Afghanistan, the activities of the Special Mission and the six-plus-two group must be aimed at addressing the issues relating to openness and a readiness to take the initiative in their work, an adequate assessment of the military and political situation developing in the country, and devising a clear United Nations strategy with respect to the principles, means and forms of the Afghan settlement.

Today's realities require the international community to find new approaches to the assessment of the military and political situation and the geopolitical situation in the Central and South Asian region and develop an essentially new conception of the Afghan settlement, which must reflect the main causes of the conflict in Afghanistan, identify the internal and external forces supporting the warring parties and consider the possible consequences of the confrontation on a regional and international scale. Such a conception must include a programme, forms and

mechanisms for international intervention and the mobilization of financial and material resources.

It must include, if necessary, time limits for conducting peacemaking activities aimed at pushing the warring parties towards peace and measures for exerting influence on violators of the rules established for the period of the international community's intervention. There can be no doubt that, until such measures are adopted, interested countries must bring strong pressure to bear on the Afghan groups and factions under their control to force them to sit down at the negotiating table without any preconditions.

We are strongly convinced that it must be in the interest of the international community to have at the helm in Afghanistan a multi-ethnic, broadly representative and responsible Government that would fully guarantee internal security and stability, control the processes of the internal reconstruction and development of all spheres of life in Afghanistan and also ensure the conduct of a highly responsible foreign policy within the framework of a civilized dialogue with all countries on the basis of generally recognized international norms.

What Afghanistan will be — an Islamic or a secular State — is, in the final analysis, for Afghans themselves to decide. They must elect a government in the country without intrigues or outside interference. In pursuing such a policy, the international community must not show preference to one or other faction or group in Afghanistan, but instead should create the most favourable possible external conditions for launching a broad and comprehensive national dialogue in Afghanistan on the basis of the clear prospects of an all-round plan for the political, social and economic rehabilitation of Afghanistan.

5. While it welcomes overall the activities of the Afghanistan sanctions committee, Kazakhstan also supports a carefully thought out approach to the issue of introducing additional measures against the Afghan group known as the Taliban movement. Kazakhstan believes that sanctions, introduced as a necessary measure, must be justified by their ends. Precisely for that reason, the Security Council, before adopting additional measures, must carefully evaluate the impact of the sanctions currently in force on all aspects of resolving the situation in Afghanistan, and, first and foremost, their unintended consequences for the civilian population.

Experience shows that imposing tougher sanctions against the Taliban adversely affects the peace process and complicates the prospects for an intra-Afghan dialogue under United Nations auspices.

6. In future, Kazakhstan is ready to officially recognize a Government of Afghanistan that will be capable of truly uniting the Afghan people around it, ensuring respect for the rights and freedoms of all the nationalities in Afghanistan, addressing the country's internal problems responsibly and conducting a peaceful foreign policy.

Kazakhstan has no preconceived attitude towards any group or faction in Afghanistan. The coming to power in Afghanistan of the Taliban or their adversaries will not signify the arrival of the long-awaited peace in that country.

At the present time, however, more than 90 per cent of the country is formally under Taliban control. In this situation, it would be preferable to gradually move away from refusing all contact with them and to establish contacts with the

movement's leaders with a view to the possibility of convincing them to set about forming a responsible Government.

The Taliban's lack of official recognition must not be an obstacle to establishing contacts with the movement, which constitutes a real political force in Afghanistan and an integral or, in any case, a potential element of any future plan for the internal political reconstruction of the country. In this context, it makes sense to establish a direct dialogue with the Taliban at both the bilateral and multilateral levels, with mandatory observance of the international sanctions currently in force and the moratorium on official diplomatic recognition, which can be lifted only in exchange for flexibility on the part of Taliban with regard to fulfilling the demands of the international community. As stated above, all factors of political influence must be brought into play to that end, with the involvement of the aforementioned countries and organizations and of Afghan emigrés. The Taliban must see clearly and realize the advantages and prospects of cooperating with the international community and securing from it the necessary guarantees. The establishment of a dialogue precisely on this basis will, in our opinion, help to overcome the deadlock in dealing with the Afghan problem.

7. An analysis of the activities of the world's leading mass media shows that, as a result of the information vacuum that has formed around Afghanistan, the resources of the international community are being spent to address problems in other regions of the world, which are being given priority based on the political and economic interests of the key Powers. Kazakhstan wishes to emphasize, in this connection, the importance of filling this vacuum and actively moving the Afghan problem into the focus of the international community's attention through the world's leading mass media. The presentation of this problem must be balanced and show the unanimous desire of the world community to achieve the earliest possible settlement of the conflict, without a hint of preference for one group or another in Afghanistan. In other words, information on Afghanistan must be as objective as possible. The United Nations Department of Public Information must play its part in this area, as must the information agencies under its control, by developing an image strategy for drawing the attention of the international community to the problems of Afghanistan and accurate and regular reporting on the events taking place in that country.

8. Kazakhstan, in an expression of its good will, is prepared to assist as a mediator in reactivating the negotiating process. We are ready, in this connection, to organize a round of peace talks between the warring Afghan groups in Almaty. In making this proposal, Kazakhstan is not pursuing any political ambitions, nor has it any intention of competing with other States on this issue.

Kazakhstan does not aspire to leadership in the Afghan peace process and considers that such talks can take place in any State acceptable to the parties to the negotiations. The main criterion must be the agreement of the warring Afghan groups, in principle, to sit down at the negotiating table without preconditions and with a clearly agreed agenda for the talks.

Kazakhstan is also putting forward for discussion the idea of holding a high-level meeting of States and groups with real influence on the situation in Afghanistan for the purpose of discussing the regional situation. We believe that the most important condition for creating a constructive atmosphere of trust at such a meeting has to be an informal and open exchange of views on the whole range of

problems relating to Afghanistan, with no rigid agenda and without the adoption of any final documents or political or other statements on the issues discussed. We are prepared to hold such a meeting in Almaty. The rank of the participants in the meeting could initially be fixed at the level of experts, but only experts who are competent and fully conversant with the situation. In the event of a constructive dialogue, the format and level of meetings could be higher in the future.

The next stage in this regard could be the holding of a special meeting of the United Nations Security Council, which, as was noted above, would be a preliminary step towards the adoption by the international community of large-scale and comprehensive measures to resolve the situation in Afghanistan and would allow a United Nations conception of this problem to be developed.

It is clear that the holding of meetings at different levels can yield practical results only if there is a constructive atmosphere characterized by a serious attitude towards the Afghan problem and provided that the interested countries, having abandoned their geopolitical ambitions, cease providing military and material assistance to the warring Afghan groups, lay their cards on the table, work out common approaches to resolving the situation in Afghanistan and, as a first step, immediately set about forcing the warring Afghan groups to sit down at the negotiating table without any preconditions.

Notwithstanding that the belligerent parties are counting on settling the conflict by force, which involves their rejection of any peace initiative proposed by the interested States, there is, nevertheless, a need to make use of their dependence on outside sources for their military potential. Otherwise, peace conferences and meetings devoted to considering the situation in Afghanistan will prove to be ineffective and will be incapable of having a positive effect on the process of seeking a peaceful settlement.

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